

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**U.S.-TURKISH RELATIONS: THE ROAD TO
IMPROVING A TROUBLED STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP**

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ABSTRACT

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Since the fall of the Iron Curtain the strong bilateral relationship based on security against the Soviet threat that the United States and Turkey enjoyed during the Cold War has changed. Domestic issues within Turkey, such as the economic crisis in 2001, the Kurdish issue in Southeast Turkey, and the advancement of democratization as well as international issues such as Turkey's role in both Gulf Wars, Turkey's drive for European Union (EU) membership, and Turkey's involvement in the Balkans and the Caucasus have also been instrumental in catalyzing this change. Turkey is now and will remain an important partner for the U.S. The question is not, "How important is Turkey?" but "How is Turkey important?" The U.S. must address this question and develop a strong diverse relationship with Turkey based on their convergent interests, and not solely on security. Both countries need to adapt their approaches to this changing relationship in order to reap the potential benefits that a strong bilateral relationship can provide. This paper examines some of the causes of tension in this alliance, explores the current interests of both countries, and proposes a way ahead to solidify this strategic partnership.

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U.S.-TURKISH RELATIONS: THE ROAD TO IMPROVING A TROUBLED STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

INTRODUCTION

The United States and Turkey have enjoyed a long-standing strong bilateral relationship that, during the Cold War, was founded primarily on security against the Soviet threat. Since the fall of the Iron Curtain this relationship has changed. Domestic issues within Turkey, such as the economic crisis in 2001, the Kurdish issue in Southeast Turkey, and the advancement of democratization, have been factors in this changing relationship. International issues such as Turkey's role in both Gulf Wars, Turkey's drive for European Union (EU) membership, and Turkey's involvement in the Balkans and the Caucasus have also been instrumental. The basis of the U.S.-Turkish relationship is expanding outside the area of security to include economic and political issues. There are now multiple convergent and divergent interests effecting this alliance. Turkey is now and will remain an important partner for the U.S. The U.S. must develop a strong diverse relationship with Turkey based on their convergent interests, and not solely on security. Both countries need to adapt their approaches to this changing relationship in order to reap the potential benefits that a strong bilateral relationship can provide. This paper will examine some of the causes of the fissures in this alliance, explore the current interests of both countries, and propose a way ahead to solidify this strategic partnership.

BACKGROUND

Following World War II the United States and Turkey began a long-term alliance based on a shared concern regarding the threat posed by the Soviet Union. Throughout the Cold War security issues remained the foundation of this relationship. Over the years the alliance has produced high degrees of cooperation, but also serious strains. The Truman Doctrine of 1947 provided much needed U.S. aid to Turkey and was a significant step in solidifying relations. Turkey's participation in the Korean War in 1950 and subsequent entrance into NATO in 1952 further cemented Turkey's place as a trusted U.S. ally.¹ The late 1950s witnessed a further strengthening of this alliance with a significant increase in U.S. military presence in Turkey including the stationing nearly 30,000 U.S. servicemen there.

But the relationship has also endured difficult periods. Following the Cuban missile crisis and the subsequent U.S. withdrawal of Jupiter missiles from Turkey, Turkey felt betrayed because it believed the U.S. had reached a secret deal with the Soviets.² In 1964 the "Johnson letter" (a letter sent by President Johnson to Turkish President Ismet İnönü) warned the Turkish leadership that if Turkey intervened to protect the Turkish Cypriot minority, NATO would not provide defense guarantees against Soviet aggression and specified that U.S.- provided military

materials could not be used in operations in Cyprus. This letter reportedly enraged President İnönü and caused great mistrust among the Turkish military and political elite.³ In 1974 Turkey conducted a military action in Northern Cyprus to protect the Turkish Cypriot minority against what Turkey perceived as an attempted Greek takeover of the island. Ankara's decision to send troops to Cyprus initially met with tacit U.S. support. However, as the Turkish military expanded its territorial control and opted for a long-term presence on the island, the U.S. position changed. In 1975 the U.S. Congress imposed an arms embargo on Turkey inflicting considerable damage to U.S.-Turkish relations.⁴ Turks felt that the U.S. had abandoned them and sided with the Greeks. But despite these difficulties the relation remained solid because it was based on one overwhelming mutual interest – security.

Following the collapse of the Iron Curtain, Turkey's position in the world and its relation to the U.S. was questioned. Turkey's geostrategic value to the West was no longer clear-cut. The pillar of security had fallen out of the relationship. But the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and subsequent Gulf War decisively affected U.S.-Turkish relations. Despite domestic opposition, Turkey's President Turgut Özal quickly sided with the U.S. During the Gulf War Ankara granted access and overflight rights for American military aircraft. Some 100,000 Turkish troops were deployed to the Iraqi border, pinning down substantial Iraqi forces.⁵ Turkey closed the oil pipeline from Iraq, causing a significant loss of income, and subsequently provided assistance in aiding displaced Kurds. Following the war Turkey's position as a strong and reliable U.S. ally in the post-Cold War world was solidified when Turkey allowed the use of Incirlik Air Base to conduct Operation PROVIDE COMFORT/Operation NORTHERN WATCH.

Throughout the 1990s the U.S.-Turkish relationship continued to emphasize security issues. Regional security concerns in the Balkans, the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia along with challenges such as weapons of mass destruction (WMD) proliferation, ballistic missile defense, and countering terrorism dominated the countries' agendas. The alliance also began to display tentative signs of diversification. The U.S. strongly supported Turkey's candidacy for EU membership. At the December 1997 EU Luxembourg summit Turkey was not included as a candidate for membership. The U.S. then aggressively applied diplomatic pressure and at the 1999 EU Helsinki summit the EU recognized Turkey's candidacy. The U.S. appreciates that Turkey's membership in the EU will encourage democratization and reform. The alternative is to relegate Turkey to the edges of Europe, increasing the chances of it becoming a future liability.⁶ The U.S. also supported Turkey's efforts to establish the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC) as well as an oil pipeline from Baku thru Tbilisi to

Ceyhan (BTC pipeline). This pipeline will provide a secure and reliable source of oil while acting as a counterweight to Russian and Iranian influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia.

As U.S.-Turkish relations in the 1990's progressed, the U.S. also began to address domestic Turkish issues such as the Kurdish problem in Southeast Turkey and human rights concerns. The U.S. urged Turkey to seek a peaceful settlement to the Kurdish problem and to implement reforms that would safeguard the human rights of all Turkish citizens. The Kurdish problem was ameliorated with the capture of the Kurdistan's Workers' Party (PKK) leader, Abdullah Öcalan, in 1999 and the subsequent disbanding of the PKK. However, the U.S. saw little progress in the area of human rights and the U.S. Congress began to restrict arms transfers to Turkey.⁷

Despite differences concerning the PKK and human rights issues, U.S.-Turkish relations still enjoyed a period of harmony in the late 1990s. A number of developments affected this; the rapprochement between Greece and Turkey catalyzed by the devastating earthquakes in both countries in 1999, the consolidation of the Turkish-Israeli relationship and the associated decrease in Congressional pressure on Turkey, collaboration in Bosnia and Kosovo, and the end to the PKK insurgency. The U.S. supported Turkey's global interests (making Turkey a partner on the energy corridor leading out of the Caspian basin and Turkey's EU candidacy) while Turkey provided Washington with assistance in the region, from the Balkans to the Caucasus to the Middle East.⁸ As the relationship entered the 21st Century the Bush administration decreased the emphasis on globalization and promoting democracy and focused on security threats such as WMD and ballistic missile defense.⁹ Initially, despite the shifts in priorities, U.S.-Turkish relations continued to remain positive and strong.

Following the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center on 11 September 2001, Turkey immediately pledged its support to the U.S. It opened up Incirlik Air Base and its air space for flights in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM in Afghanistan. Turkey deployed Commando units to train Northern Alliance fighters and provided support to humanitarian aid operations. In addition, Turkey cooperated on intelligence, anti money-laundering operations, and maritime interdiction efforts to counter international terrorism.¹⁰ With backing from the U.S., Turkey assumed command of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in April 2002.¹¹ Turkey appeared to be seeing eye-to-eye with the U.S. on its war on terrorism in all areas except one, Iraq.

On 1 March 2003 the apparently strong U.S.-Turkish relations began to display some fissures. The Turkish parliament failed, by three votes, to pass a motion to allow U.S. troops to base in Turkey for Operation IRAQI FREEDOM.¹² The United States was forced to launch

Operation IRAQI FREEDOM without using Turkey to support a Northern Front. On July 4, 2003 Turkish U.S. relations took a further turn for the worse when the U.S. captured 11 Turkish military personnel operating in Northern Iraq. The Turkish military viewed this incident as an embarrassment and an insult. Turkish Generals spoke out harshly against the U.S. military action and Turkish public opinion became more anti-American. The differences over Iraq brought relations between Turkey and the U.S to one of the lowest points in decades.

TURKEY'S DOMESTIC SITUATION

POLITICAL AND MILITARY

It is impossible to separate politics in Turkey from the Turkish military. The Turkish military is viewed as the protector of the secular principles put forth by Turkey's revered founding father, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Because of this the Turkish military establishment has come to enjoy great influence and power within Turkish political circles and is a dominant domestic and foreign policy actor.¹³ Three times, in 1960, 1971, and 1980 the Turkish military stepped in and conducted coups against governments that it viewed as not upholding the western oriented, Kemalist principles. The military also conducted a "post-modern" coup on September 28, 1997 when it applied overt pressure forcing Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan, of the conservative Islamic Welfare Party (Refah Partisi) to step down. In all of these "coups" the majority of the Turkish public accepted the military's actions because they felt they were necessary for the well being of the state and because the military did not seek to impose permanent military governance.

The Turkish military wields the bulk of its political influence through the National Security Council (NSC), the vehicle used in Turkey to determine foreign policy. The NSC is comprised of political and military leaders, but has been historically dominated by the military. It has become the primary vehicle for the military to express its official views in the decision making process. The military's dominance of the NSC enables it to determine national security policy and its own budget and how it is allocated.¹⁴ Historically the political establishment in Turkey demonstrated that it was unable and unwilling to limit the military's influence and routinely saluted once the military expressed its opinion on important issues.

This situation appears to have begun to change. In the national elections of November 2003, a political party with Islamic roots, the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi or AKP) won a majority of the power in the Turkish Parliament. This broke a decade-long trend of governance by impotent, fragile coalition governments. Turkey's Islamist parties and politicians have traditionally been critics of the West, Turkey's close ties with the

U.S., and American foreign policy in the Middle East. Turkey's policy toward its Islamist parties has become a part of the agenda in bilateral discussions with the U.S.¹⁵ Large parts of the staunchly secular Turkish political and military elite believe that the Islamists' participation in politics is aimed at weakening the secular state and replacing it with a theocratic Islamic republic. The U.S. has treated Turkey's repeated dissolution of the Islamist political parties with some degree of uneasiness, but not outright condemnation, because of its implications for the consolidation of democracy in Turkey. Many Turks feel that Americans fail to understand the inherent dangers that political Islam presents to Turkey.¹⁶

Since the Helsinki Summit in 1999 where the EU declared Turkey a candidate for membership¹⁷, the AKP's number one foreign policy objective has been to gain membership in the EU. Turkey has to satisfy EU accession rules, the so-called Copenhagen criteria. The EU's main objection is that Ankara does not satisfy the political leg of the Copenhagen criteria. Turkey is viewed as a flawed democracy because its military has too much influence over politics. In addition, Ankara has a poor human rights record particularly because of its treatment of the Kurds.¹⁸ The AKP has taken steps to trim the political powers of the military. In August of 2003, EU driven reforms civilianized the NSC, in which the military used to enjoy dominance. There are moves to change the Secretary General position in the NSC from a Turkish general to a civilian.¹⁹ The Turkish military was also noticeably absent from the debate on support of operations in Iraq, which may be a sign that it is willing to relinquish some of its authority to civilian leaders.

Over one year following its accession to power, the AKP still maintains domestic public support and has received widespread international support as well. This has changed the political landscape and international relations with Turkey significantly. The AKP has passed reform legislation in areas including human rights, eliminating the death penalty, reducing the political power of the military, and increasing Kurdish rights. In August 2003 Turkey granted amnesty to members of the PKK, allowing former members to lay down their arms and receive minimal punishment. Turkey has also increased cultural rights for the Kurds, allowing education in Kurdish, Kurdish TV and radio programming, and even Kurdish election propaganda. Whether it gains EU membership or not, the desire for EU acceptance has catalyzed political reforms beneficial for Turkey.

In April of 2004 there will be elections in Turkey. The AKP is expected to again emerge victorious and should be able to expand on the above mentioned reforms. In December 2004 the EU will decide whether or not to offer Turkey an accession calendar for eventual Turkish accession. Required reforms for EU membership include a democratic political system

characterized by free and fair elections, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and protection of minorities.²⁰ While Turkey may not have satisfied all of the EU's requirements to date, the AKP is addressing them aggressively.

ECONOMIC

Turkey's governmental economic record throughout the latter part of the 20th century is one of mismanagement and corruption. Previous governments have prevented transparency within the economic system, postponed difficult reforms and, when problems erupted, blamed individuals rather than examining structural/systemic causes. While it is the 16th largest economy in the world, Turkey stands as an example of potential unrealized.²¹ This situation culminated in February 2001 with the worst economic crisis in the Republic's history.²² The Bush administration came to Turkey's aid by pushing through a 31 billion dollar combined IMF/World Bank bailout package.

The AKP has, for the most part, adhered to the conditions set forth by the IMF. The economic situation in Turkey has begun to stabilize but Turkey must seriously address basic problems to fix its economic woes. Necessary economic reforms include the presence of a strong market economy, the capacity to withstand competitive pressure and market forces within the EU, and free movement of goods, capital, services, and people.²³ Turkey will need support from both the EU (More than 50 percent of Turkish trade has consistently been with European countries.²⁴) and the U.S. in order to take the required steps to reform its economy and thus become a more stable country.

NATIONAL INTERESTS

Traditionally U.S.-Turkish relations have concentrated on security issues relegating political and economic aspects to a lesser role. But nations today are more interconnected and interdependent than ever before and the U.S.-Turkish relationship can no longer be couched entirely in terms of security. This alliance should be developed upon major converging interests whether security related or not. The U.S.-Turkish relationship contains many convergent and some divergent interests. Both countries should identify and build upon the convergent issues while accepting the divergent issues.

CONVERGENT ISSUES

Political

There are convergent political issues between the U.S. and Turkey that can serve as foundations for future relations. Turkey needs political continuity to affect necessary reforms

and stabilize its domestic and international situation. Turkey wants to integrate more fully with the West, become a member of the EU, and maintain its strong secular tradition. Turkey would like to strengthen its relations with Jordan, Egypt, Syria, and other Arab states²⁵ and is keen to see that the Middle East does not become dominated by any radical revisionist regime reminiscent of the days of pan-Arabism.

The U.S. does not want to see an inward-looking Turkey, but would prefer a Turkey that integrates with the West, maintains a strong and secular political system, achieves a stable and growing market economy, and becomes an important player in regional and global markets.²⁶ The U.S. would also prefer to see a Turkey that can be used as a political model for emerging democracies in the Middle East, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. Today most Middle Eastern countries do not view Turkey's political system as a viable model. They view Turkey as a secularist regime buttressed by a military prone to intervention. Reforms initiated by the AKP to reduce the role of the military in politics and increase political effectiveness will begin to change these perceptions and increase Turkey's viability as a secular model.

Economic

The United States and Turkey share common economic interests. Notwithstanding Turkey's designation as a "big emerging market" by the Department of Commerce, the economic dimension of the relationship has developed more slowly than anticipated. Turkey would like to expand and diversify its markets while also receiving more foreign trade and investment. The Turkish private sector has been vocal in describing the opportunities for Turkish-American cooperation in support of Turkey's economic development. The U.S. would like to see Turkey become a strong, stable regional economy. This would reduce the amount of assistance the U.S. would have to provide Turkey, while countering Russian and Iranian economic influence of the Caucasus and Central Asia.

The U.S. sees a Turkey fully integrated into the EU as extremely positive not only for Turkey's economy, but for that of the entire region as well. In 1999 the U.S. endorsed Turkey's inclusion in the G-20 group, the club of the most important developed and developing economies expected to play a central role in shaping the world economy.²⁷ The U.S. was instrumental in garnering the necessary backing for the BTC pipeline. This pipeline, which started construction in 2002, offers an additional source of energy from the Caspian region. In addition, it will encourage the economic and political independence of the Central Asian republics and provide a greater guarantee for energy sources.

Security

Turkey is located in a region that is commonly referred to as a “dangerous neighborhood”. Security threats exist in all directions from the Balkans to the Middle East, to the Caucasus and Russia, to Central Asia. There are also regionally based security threats from WMD, ballistic missiles, and terrorism. Turkey desires deterrence and security reassurance in its relations with Russia. The strategic relationship with the U.S. and the NATO security guarantee remain indispensable in relation to the Russian risk.²⁸ Ankara sees Washington as having the primary responsibility to constrain Moscow, if needed. Turkey also views political and security vacuums in the Caucasus and Central Asia as offering new flashpoints for conflict. In the Caucasus both Georgia and Azerbaijan feel threatened by Russia and both have signed defense cooperation agreements with Turkey.²⁹

Turkey benefits considerably from its cooperation with the U.S. concerning the containment of these diverse security risks. There are ballistic missile risks from Iran and Syria where the U.S. and Israel are seen as the only security partners capable of providing Turkey with at least a minimally effective means of defense in the coming years.³⁰ The U.S. and Turkish perspectives on the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East also converge. Both view the development and spread of new WMD programs as a serious threat to regional stability and peace.³¹

Another concern is access to American military equipment and training as well as defense-industrial cooperation. Despite its current economic difficulties, Turkey is in the midst of a major military modernization program. While Turkey has moved to diversify some of its sources of military goods and services by strengthening relations with Israel and letting some contracts to Russian and European vendors³² it is still heavily reliant on U.S. military assistance and support. It anticipates large purchases of American military equipment or U.S.-source technology. The next decade is likely to provide cooperation and co-production arrangements with the U.S. that will increase opportunities for the U.S. defense industry.

A unique convergent issue is Turkey’s increasingly strong ties with Israel. In the 1990s Turkey solidified its relations with Israel to bolster its intelligence, expand trade and investment, secure help against Syria if necessary, and increase support from the U.S. by employing the Israeli lobby. Turkey has signed agreements with Israel on trade, tourism, scientific exchange, and defense. Their intelligence relationship is close and Turkey has received military technology from Israel.³³ The U.S. favors closer relations between Israel and Turkey for several reasons. It strengthens ties between the only two established democracies in the region. It gives Turkey another channel of access to defense technologies that the U.S. congress

frequently denies or delays. And it creates stronger pro-U.S. military cooperation among the region's powers.

As the defense of territory has become a less prominent concern in the wake of the Cold War and September 11, there has been a rise in attention to transnational and transregional risks. These risks run the gambit from spillovers of terrorism, to political violence, to WMD, to the growing reach of ballistic missiles. The United States and Turkey have cooperated numerous times in countering terrorism. The U.S. provided pressure on Syria to expel PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan in 1998 and played a critical role in his capture in 1999.³⁴ More recently, after the bombings of September 11, 2001 Turkey actively assisted the U.S. in its fight against terrorism. Turkey itself has recently been targeted by Al-Qaeda affiliated terrorist groups with the terrorist bombings in Istanbul in November 2003 and this is another factor which helps solidify the U.S.-Turkish security perspective. Turkey's location, in a region home to many international terrorist groups, can provide the U.S. a platform for force projection and critical intelligence.

DIVERGENT ISSUES

While on a majority of issues U.S. and Turkish interests converge, there are several areas where interests diverge. Turkey and the U.S. need to acknowledge and address divergent issues and work toward an acceptable compromise or agree to disagree on these issues.

Iraq

Over the past several years Iraq has been one of the more obvious areas of divergence. The March 2003 Turkish Parliamentary vote denying the U.S. use of Turkey for operations in Iraq was perhaps the culminating event highlighting the differences. That decision caused a major rift in the relationship from which repercussions are still being felt today.

U.S. goals in Iraq were to oust Saddam Hussein and remove the Baath regime from power, thereby reducing a terrorist, WMD, and ballistic missile threat. While Turkey did not support Saddam Hussein, it had different goals in its approach to Iraq. These goals were based on economics and ethnic issues. Turkey's goals have been to restore trade and economic ties with Iraq to recoup losses suffered from the sanctions and the closing of the oil pipeline following the Gulf War. An additional concern, and one that cannot be overstressed, is that Turkey wants to preserve the territorial integrity of Iraq and prevent the establishment of an independent Kurdistan. Turkey fought a decade-long war against a Kurdish insurgency in Southeast Turkey and strongly fears that an independent Kurdistan along its southern border would rekindle a similar movement within its own borders.

There are signs that Turkey and the U.S. may have adjusted their positions and may be willing to look past their differences toward a mutually acceptable goal. Turkey has since offered to send troops to assist in peacekeeping efforts in post-Saddam Iraq (vetoed by the Iraqi governing council) and the U.S. has indicated that it will let Turkey compete for commercial contracts.

Iran

Turkey, like the U.S., is very concerned with the threat of fundamentalist Islam originating from a bordering state like Iran. Turkey has grave suspicions of Iran's political and economic policies in the region and has accused Iran of supporting Islamic extremists and PKK terrorists. Turkey and Iran are currently engaged in a power struggle in the Caspian region, both trying to exert their political and economic influence with the developing countries there. The U.S., with its focus on security issues, prefers to isolate Iran in an attempt to promote reform or regime change. Unlike the U.S., Turkey favors good economic relations with Iran and opposes American efforts to isolate this country.

Downplaying ideological differences and emphasizing pragmatism is a long-established pillar of Turkey's relations with Iran. Necmettin Erbakan, when Prime Minister, signed a natural gas pipeline deal in 1996.³⁵ The deal was signed while President Clinton was signing the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA), which forced Turkey to lose billions in lost opportunities in the energy sector. There is a major conflict of interest between Turkey, desperate for additional supplies of natural gas to meet its growing demand and reduce dependence on Russia, and U.S. regional strategy.³⁶

THE WAY AHEAD

There has been much debate about whether Turkey's importance as a strategic U.S. ally is increasing or decreasing in the wake of September 11, the Global War on Terrorism, and the war in Iraq. While this debate has been healthy the most important question that should be asked now is not, "How important is Turkey?" but "How is Turkey important?" The U.S.-Turkish relationship has changed, is changing, and will continue to change. It is crucial to recognize this and identify what dimensions of the relationship are changing and how. It is also critical to build the relationship upon those dimensions that reflect shared interests. The best way to do that is to develop a strategic relationship that is founded on the converging interests identified above.

While the concept of containment (either containment of the Soviet Union or of Saddam Hussein) has dropped out of the equation, there is still much common ground. Issues such as winning the war on terror, stopping the spread of WMD, promoting stable secular democracies,

and bringing energy resources of the Caspian and Central Asia to world markets provide strong incentives to work together.³⁷ The U.S.-Turkish relationship must move from the military partnership of the Cold War into a more multifaceted one. Both Turkey and the U.S. need to understand that while the importance of the relationship to both countries may fluctuate, its significance will remain high.

Considering the changing dynamics of this alliance there are four key areas of converging interests where Turkey and the United States must work together if they desire to diversify and strengthen their relationship.

ACTIVELY WORK WITH THE JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT PARTY (AKP)

Developments within Turkey are a critical determinant of how the bilateral relationship will evolve. Turkey must become more fully democratic to be in a position to achieve a durable and enhanced strategic partnership with the United States. The U.S. needs to accept and aggressively work with the AKP. Washington needs to put its frustration with Ankara, particularly concerning Iraq, in the past. To date the AKP has demonstrated that it does not desire to break from Turkey's long secular tradition. In fact, Ankara has initiated a number of reforms that advance the democratization process in Turkey and the AKP has been aggressive in its engagement with Western countries. Domestically the AKP, with its parliamentary majority and public support, represents the country's best opportunity for advancing Turkey to become the strong and reliable secular democracy that the U.S. desires. The U.S. must come to terms with the Islamic leaning Justice and Development Party.

The long term challenge for Washington is how to get Turkey to become a reliable, stable, and democratic partner. Ankara has the potential to export a great commodity, democracy, to a region whose people have endured authoritarian rule longer than Eastern Europe suffered under communism. But to do this will require Western, and in particular U.S. help. With U.S. support, Turks can communicate their experiences of establishing democratic institutions to the Iraqi people and the rest of the Middle East.³⁸

Turkey is now the largest recipient of IMF funding in history.³⁹ Most of its economic woes can be directly attributed to the malfunctioning political system in which leaders have refused to assume responsibility and accountability.⁴⁰ Washington and Ankara's positions would be strengthened if Turkey genuinely fulfilled the Copenhagen requirements for EU membership. The U.S., because of its involvement in Turkey's 2001 economic crisis, is already engaged in shaping Turkey's economic policy. It must also be involved in dealing with Turkey's political conditions, the process of democratization, and improving human rights. The new AKP

provides Washington the opportunity to cultivate a model that it badly needs for the entire Arab world. Washington must pursue a policy that encourages political reform and does not show any ambivalence on the question of democracy.

AGGRESSIVELY SUPPORT TURKEY'S EUROPEAN UNION MEMBERSHIP

The U.S. has been an aggressive and determined supporter of Turkish EU membership and needs to continue the effort. Instead of conducting diplomacy in European capitols for Turkey's EU membership, the U.S. should provide assistance to prepare Turkey to become a reliable and contributing member of the EU. With its drive to gain EU membership, Ankara has and will continue to become more closely attuned to European views than has been the case in the recent past. For many matters Brussels will become more important than Washington and those in Washington will need to not only accept this but encourage it. Turkey, as a member of the EU, would still be a positive vehicle for U.S. policy in the region. Many of the U.S. requirements in regions where Turkey may play a role are issues beyond the direct purview of the EU and would still require U.S.-Turkish cooperation.⁴¹ Turkey would still need U.S. investment, science and technology, and education and it is in these areas that the relationship should expand.

ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE

It would be advantageous for the U.S. to improve economic relations with Turkey. Deeper U.S. economic ties will reinforce the U.S.-Turkish relationship so that when the next contentious issue arises ties will not rest uniquely upon a security-based foundation. In addition, strong economic ties would provide an additional market for U.S. investment and foreign trade. The U.S. can take several immediate steps to improve economic relations with Turkey. In Iraq, the U.S. can work to increase Turkey's role in reconstruction by incorporating Turkey into the post-conflict rebuilding contracts. Turkey is the largest economy in the Middle East and can act as a direct supplier of urgently needed goods and services to Iraq.⁴² Washington can also strongly encourage private U.S. firms to conduct trade with Turkey and to invest in Turkey's economic future. Most of Turkey's economic woes can be directly attributed to the malfunctioning political system in which leaders have refused to assume responsibility and accountability.⁴³ The U.S. can also provide assistance in helping Turkey's political establishment address its economic challenges.

SECURITY

The United States has a considerable stake in engaging Turkey as an increasingly capable security partner adjacent to insecure regions. Turkey's geographic location will continue to make it important for the U.S. in security matters. As a contributor to the security future of Europe, the Middle East, the Caucasus, and Central Asia, Turkey is unique. U.S. interests in these regions are among the most durable in U.S. foreign policy. Turkey should remain a partner of the U.S. in combating terrorism, WMD, and ballistic missiles while helping to find security solutions in the Middle East and contributing to the support of U.S. policies in the Caucasus and Central Asia.⁴⁴

Military relations have, in the past, been the bedrock of the U.S.-Turkish alliance. Based on the March "No" vote by the Turkish parliament coupled with the perceived lack of engagement by the Turkish General Staff, this bedrock shows signs of fracture. The U.S. should establish new military confidence building measures at the highest levels to regain the trust of the Turkish General Staff. Some ways to do this are to increase military diplomacy, establish Turkish liaison positions with U.S. units in Iraq, and conduct more frequent high-level visits and military exchanges among policy planners. To increase public understanding both the U.S. and Turkey need to publicize bilateral military cooperation. All of these steps would help the U.S. and Turkish militaries reengage in collaborative and productive policy development.

CONCLUSION

One of the most notable aspects of the bilateral relationship between Turkey and the United States has been its enduring strength. In comparison to the 1950s the management of the alliance today has become much more complex and has demonstrated that, at times, it can be outright problematic. As discussed above, Turkish and American interests are broadly convergent and both countries must now focus on these interests to strengthen this alliance. The first interest to concentrate on is Turkey's membership in the European Union. If Turkey becomes a member, the net result is likely to be greater normalization and maturity in relations between Washington and Ankara. But if Turkey's membership stalls there will be a greater Turkish reliance on the U.S. and greater potential for strains in the relationship. Secondly, Turkey and the U.S. may seek peace and stability in areas of shared concern, but must accept that their policies may differ, as in Iran and Iraq. Thirdly, Turkey's role as a conduit for Middle Eastern and Caspian oil, and restoration of full Iraqi exports via Turkish pipelines, would reinforce Turkey's role in the world energy picture. Finally, the strategic partnership should go beyond geographic position. Security problems such as WMD, terrorism, and ballistic missiles

are transregional and not tied to state boundaries. The U.S. must recognize that shifts in its foreign policy will affect the relationship in ways not previously considered. Washington must consider the 2nd and 3rd order effects of its policy decisions and anticipate their long-term effects on Turkey.

Turkey's internal transformation will set the tone of the bilateral relationship. An impoverished and unstable Turkey might impede reconstruction of Southeastern Europe and reinforce an existing tendency toward instability in the Caucasus and Central Asia. It could also contribute to a deteriorating security environment in the Middle East.⁴⁵ Europe is likely to remain the overwhelmingly important economic partner for Turkey while Washington remains Ankara's key security partner.

From a U.S. perspective the best scenario is one where Turkey makes good progress all around, achieving a democratic political system with extensive individual, civil, and political rights, a dynamic market economy, stable and good relations with neighboring countries, and EU membership. Achieving these objectives will require substantial support and assistance from the U.S. But a Turkey that achieves these goals would provide the U.S. desired stability in the region and allow the U.S. to champion Turkey's secular image further afield.⁴⁶ U.S.-Turkish relations must become more diverse emphasizing democracy, human rights, civil society, and strategic cooperation. Washington must see Turkey as a member of the "Western Community", and treat Turkey on equal footing with EU countries.⁴⁷

The U.S. must put aside past differences and actively and positively engage Turkey. It was, in fact, U.S. support of Turkey's democratization process which facilitated the AKP coming into power. And it was the AKP, using a democratic system with a decreased role of the military, that led to the Turkish parliament's refusal to allow the U.S. to use its territory for operations in Iraq. Turkey employed the system and procedures the U.S. has encouraged and championed, but the results, at least on 1 March 2003, turned out to be contrary to U.S. desires. The U.S. needs to learn to accept such decisions, not just from Turkey but from all democracies. In the long run, U.S. assistance and cooperation with Turkey now will provide for a stronger, more stable and more Western-aligned Turkey in the future. This would be advantageous for both countries.

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ENDNOTES

¹ Sabri Sayari, "Turkey and the United States: Changing Dynamics of an Enduring Alliance," in *Turkey's Foreign Policy in the 21st Century*, eds. Tareq Y. Ismael and Mustafa Aydin (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003), 28.

² Yalim Eralp, "An Insider's View of Turkey's Foreign Policy and Its American Connection," in *The United States and Turkey: Allies in Need*, ed. Morton Abramowitz (New York: The Century Foundation, 2003), 110.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Sayari, 29.

⁵ F. Stephen Larrabee and Ian O. Lesser, *Turkish Foreign Policy in an Age of Uncertainty* (Arlington VA: RAND, 2003), 166.

⁶ Henri J. Barkey, "The Endless Pursuit: Improving U.S.-Turkish Relations," in *The United States and Turkey: Allies in Need*, ed. Morton Abramowitz (New York: The Century Foundation, 2003), 216.

⁷ Sayari, 35.

⁸ Soner Cagaptay, "Turkey's Future Direction and U.S.-Turkey Relations," *Statement before the House International Relations Committee Hearing*, 1 October 2003, 3.

⁹ Barkey, 231.

¹⁰ Ibid., 233.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Soner Cagaptay, "An Accident on the Road to U.S.-Turkish Cooperation in Iraq: Implications for Turkey," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Policy Watch # 717*, (3 March 2003): 1.

¹³ Barkey, 228.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Sayari, 35.

¹⁶ Birol A. Yesilada, "Turkish-U.S. Relations," in *Dangerous Neighborhood: Contemporary Issues in Turkey's Foreign Relations*, ed. Michael S. Radu (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2003), 209.

¹⁷ Eralp, 135.

¹⁸ Cagaptay, *Turkey's Future Direction and U.S.-Turkish Relations*, 1.

¹⁹ Greg Rhoades <rhoadesg@odc-t.ankara.af.mil>, "Thanks," electronic mail message to Patrick Gillis <popomypopo@yahoo.com>, 9 February 2004.

²⁰ Yesilada, 195.

²¹ Ibid., 197.

²² Barkey, 232.

²³ Yesilada, 195.

²⁴ Barkey, 216.

²⁵ Kemal Kirisci, "U.S.-Turkish Relations: New Uncertainties in a Renewed Partnership," in *Turkey in World Politics: An Emerging Multiregional Power*, eds. Barry Rubin and Kemal Kirisci (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001), 135.

²⁶ Yesilada, 194.

²⁷ Ibid., 134.

²⁸ Larrabee, 171.

²⁹ Yesilada, 205.

³⁰ Larrabee, 171.

³¹ Sayari, 31.

³² Larrabee, 173.

³³ Eralp, 130.

³⁴ Kirisci, 136.

³⁵ Ibid., 140.

³⁶ Yesilada, 204.

³⁷ Mark Paris, "U.S.-Turkish Relations: Looking to the Future," November 2003; available from <<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/media/parris/parris1103.htm>>; Internet; accessed 27 November 2003.

³⁸ Soner Cagaptay, "Turkey time," *National Review Online*, 20 June 2003; available from <<http://www.washingotnstitute.org/media/cagaptay/cagaptay062003.htm>>; Internet; accessed 27 November 2003.

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³⁹ Barkey, 243.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Eralp, 142.

⁴² Soner Cagaptay, "U.S.-Turkish Military Cooperation in Iraq: The Next Step," *Zaman Daily*, 13 August 2003, p. 3.

⁴³ Barkey, 243.

⁴⁴ Eralp, 141.

⁴⁵ Larrabee, 188.

⁴⁶ Yesilada, 211.

⁴⁷ Kirisci, 146.

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